

Alison Arnold Writes...

When you walk miles through today's supermarkets with their many aisles of every kind of food and household items imaginable, can you realize that once -- not so very long ago -- Duxbury had only 3 food stores?

And when you buy gasoline or have your car checked at Exxon or Barney's, think back to the days when instead of garages there were livery stables and a blacksmith shop.

Ford's store on Tremont St., said to be the oldest of its kind in America, was destroyed by fire. That store sold food, clothing and furniture.

Sweetser's, then known as Sweetser and Arnold's (no relation), also sold clothing and furniture as well as groceries. I can remember bolts of cloth on the wooden counters, and upstairs there were beds and commodes, complete with pitchers and bowls and articles delicately called "chamber mugs."

W. O. Peterson's store, which sold groceries, was in the building that later became the home of Walter Prince. The store had a pot-bellied stove in the center, replaced by a cracker barrel in summer. There was also a pickle barrel. Over the long counter were neat rows of canned goods, and 2 new products were vitamin bread and hydrox cookies.

The candy counter at one end of the store was the delight of youngsters. There were plump, gaily colored gumdrops, chocolate creams, peppermint patties, and jelly beans. Mary Peterson was very patient while young customers made up their minds how to invest their pennies. And Mose, the Peterson's big black cat, sat solemnly on the counter to watch the transactions.

People gathered at Peterson's store at noon to get their mail that was brought there from the post office by Charlie Hawkins. Peppery Sam Shaw usually took it upon himself to sort it and he read most of the postcards before he handed them over.

On rainy days there was always a group sitting around the stove in winter discussing national and local politics. And the settees on the front porch were popular spots in summer.

Morgan's blacksmith shop was where Talbot's is now. Clouds of orange and red sparks flew from the forge. Upon the anvil with ringing blows of the heavy sledge the blacksmith wrought the band of iron to the desired width and length.

I shuddered when he picked up the horse's hind foot and pressed the hot iron against it with a hiss. Then he pounded in the nails and gave them a final filing. I was assured that it didn't hurt.

The Briggs stable next to the Drew House housed

the "Martha Washington," the barge that met the trains at the Duxbury station at Millbrook. And there were horses for hire.

Cushing's livery stable in South Duxbury was about where the Curtis Compact store is now. You could rent a surrey with the fringe on top by the hour. There were very few automobiles and the horses usually reared up when they heard one approaching.

Those were the leisurely days before the first World War that changed the world.